

I wanted to write this letter since I am working, as a pre-certified Interpreter and a native Sign Language user and Spanish speaker with the skills and knowledge to work in the VRS setting. I have been working as a Sign Language Interpreter for more than 8 years, I have had the privilege of been working with a wide variety of Deaf and Hard of hearing Latino and Non-Latino consumers. Five years ago I started working for a VRS provider as a Spanish/ASL interpreter. The Video Relay Service has changed the lives of many consumers by giving the opportunity to communicate with their own language with the public, for example, the hearing community. This service has become a **Vital link** between the Deaf and hearing community.

I cannot believe this proposal that all VRS interpreters must hold a national certification from the Registry of Interpreters of the Deaf (RID). It is an unjust proposal for us Spanish/ASL interpreters and for those who are native sign language interpreters. I am a firm believer of the importance of getting certified but for us sadly, there is no equivalent Spanish/ASL test. We have in the past asked for an equivalent test but the RID has not made plans to develop a test that will assess our skills. If this proposal is adopted the results would impact us the Spanish/ASL interpreters because we don't hold RID certification and therefore the VRS will be negatively impact by the lack of qualified interpreters. There are others State Sign Language certifications that a lot of my fellow English/ASL colleagues have had acquired that are acceptable. Nevertheless these State certifications are valid and they are another tool that evaluates interpreters' skills and many of these fine interpreters as well will be out of work in case that this proposal is accepted. With that said, what would happen to the Latino Deaf and hearing community if they rely on Spanish/ASL interpreters? What would happen with all of us ASL/Spanish Interpreters and English/ASL non-RID certified Interpreters?

I am an active member of the RID and the Puerto Rico Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (PRRID), not only that I am also part of the Board of directors of the PRRID. I was deeply disappointed by the fact that the same organization that has a Chapter in Puerto Rico went ahead and proposed such atrocity and just forgot about us the Spanish/ASL interpreters, we are part of the RID membership and it seems that after all we are not. As I said before I am a strong believer of a system that validates individual skills and certified it and as a native Spanish speaker with the right training and time I could successfully pass the English/ASL test that the RID offers. This is a long term goal that I as a Child of Deaf Adults (CODA) and an interpreter who has been working to achieve. Nevertheless, this is a process that RID has made more difficult to achieve because of the requirements like a bachelor degree, the need to get to a testing site that in our case the interpreters from Puerto Rico would have to travel out of pocket, in order to take the test. Also once the test it is taken there is a time period of more than six months to receive the test results. Imagine all the non- certified interpreters at once taking this test, how long it would take to receive the results? Is RID prepared for the overflow of candidates and applications?

As an interpreter, as a CODA and Latino I support my colleague's comments that the RID wants the FCC to choose their **TEST** and **Certification** as the only valid one. This shows a hidden agenda that only will benefit the RID organization, not only that this would go against the same law that provide and requires effective communication access to all Deaf, the American with Disabilities Act(ADA). The ADA establishes that to ensure this effective communication what is requires is a **Qualified Interpreter**, not a certified one.

I am a skilled; CODA, Spanish speaker interpreter and I convey the message when I am interpreting, there is documentation from our VRS clients that they are happy and satisfied with my work. There has not been a time that they have stopped to ask me if I am certified because I am qualified. I was screened to work at VRS, and let me assure you that VRS companies have strict guidelines in the screening process since they have quality control within service providers. I would encourage you to reconsider this proposal and take a look into all sides of it, because if this proposal is adopted it would affect immensely not only the VRS industry but also the Deaf and hearing community. The Deaf community deserves qualified interpreters and if we are not available, what would happen to them? Video Relay Services has provided so much for our communities nationally and internationally. So much has been developed and please reconsider the proposal of requiring certification for those who provide interpreting services. The service providers will ensure that the quality of interpreting will be provided, please don't take that away.

Respectfully,

Marina Martinez-Cora

Spanish/ASL interpreter

San Juan, Puerto Rico